ACTION PLAN

acat

ALBERTA COUNCIL
ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

2017–2019

Publication Date: October 24, 2016

Alberta
Government

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COUNCIL MANDATE AND OPERATION 2

- DIRECTIONAL STATEMENT 2
- MANDATE 2
- VISION 2
- MISSION 2
- OPERATING PRINCIPLES 2

GOALS AND PRIORITY INITIATIVES 3

- LEARNING OUTCOMES AND PATHWAYS 3
- RESEARCH 4
- COMMUNICATION 5
- NATIONAL AND INTERPROVINCIAL COLLABORATION 5
- GOVERNANCE 6

COUNCIL MANDATE AND OPERATION

DIRECTIONAL STATEMENT

ACAT represents a balanced voice for Campus Alberta. ACAT provides leadership to influence policy, highlight/promote best practices, and create a system for access that serves all learners.

MANDATE

Established in 1974, the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) is an advisory agency accountable to the Minister of Advanced Education and, in support of Campus Alberta, responsible for providing advice and guidance regarding post-secondary admission and transfer policy.

ACAT works with its stakeholders for the benefit of learners to ensure smooth transitions from secondary to post-secondary and post-secondary to post-secondary.

VISION

Alberta's post-secondary institutions work cooperatively to provide a transfer system that is responsive to the needs of learners in the matters of admissions, transfer credit, and recognition of prior learning.

MISSION

The mission of ACAT is to be a catalyst for beneficial change and an advocate for learners in the areas of post-secondary admission and transfer throughout Campus Alberta. ACAT provides leadership and direction, as a cornerstone of Campus Alberta, in the improvement of educational opportunities for Alberta students through inter-institutional transfer. ACAT is committed to supporting and improving communication among Alberta post-secondary institutions and to promoting the advantages of a system of education, with all that this means for educational planning for the benefit of learners.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

The Council endorses the following as basic to its purpose and activities:

(a) Support for Campus Alberta's core objectives by facilitating learners to successfully navigate the Transfer System and foster lifelong learning in the advanced education system.

(b) Student access to higher education and the opportunity for student mobility from secondary to post-secondary and post-secondary to post-secondary in Alberta shall be optimized.

(c) Negotiation of opportunities for student mobility shall be based on the recognition that while learning experiences differ in a variety of ways, their substance may be virtually equivalent in terms of learning outcomes and rigor.

(d) Effective academic advising, career counseling and optimum mobility require that the student have prior knowledge of at least the minimum transfer credit which can be awarded.

(e) Individual institutions have the primary responsibility for instructional programs, even though responsibility for higher education is shared among various constituents. The responsibility of institutions includes program design and delivery, determination of academic prerequisites and student admission criteria, and certification of the academic achievement of students.

(f) Institutions have the responsibility and the prerogative to investigate the total educational background of applicants seeking admission.

(g) Post-secondary institutions are committed to developing and maintaining clearly stated policies and procedures for consideration of transfer credit and to applying them in a consistent manner.

(h) After students are granted admission to an institution under a transfer arrangement, they shall be granted the same rights and privileges as students who began their studies at the institution.

GOALS AND PRIORITY INITIATIVES

ACAT has identified five goals and associated priority initiatives in its *2017-2019 Action Plan* to guide the Council's and Secretariat's activities. ACAT's focus on leadership and oversight, collaboration, research and evidence-based decision-making, and technology and tools in support of post-secondary learner pathways and mobility is reflected within each of the goals and initiatives.

LEARNING OUTCOMES AND PATHWAYS

ACAT will build on its examination of the role of learning outcomes in enhancing access to learner pathways and mobility by identifying best practices, facilitating articulation activities and use of data, and supporting outcomes-based models for Alberta's Transfer System and other forms of recognition of prior learning.

PRIORITY INITIATIVES:

a) In collaboration with the Ministry and relevant stakeholders, develop a learning outcomes plan that affirms ACAT's role and articulates a clear purpose and direction for learning outcomes, and identifies action items to address the findings of the May 2016 *Alberta Forum on Post-secondary Learning Outcomes: Sharing Principles, Effective Practices, and Challenges*.

b) In ACAT's Learner Pathways Catalog within Alberta's new Learner Pathways System, begin to collect and analyze data from at least one optional field for post-secondary institution information about the inclusion of learning outcomes in their courses or programs and the effect on transfer decisions and agreements.

c) Collaborate with and support ACAT Articulation Committees in their program-area learning outcomes initiatives, enhance the articulation committee model in Alberta, and support best practices and collaboration with provincial partner Articulation Committees.

d) Led by ACAT's Articulation Sub-committee and Council and in collaboration with the Ministry, grow the Annual Articulation Chairs Meeting into an annual Articulation Conference that connects with the Chairs, Committees, and broader post-secondary system.

e) Use the information/data collected from ACAT's Learner Pathways Catalog and Articulation Committees to inform further understanding of the relationship between learning outcomes and recognition of prior learning, including a focus on transfer credit and an initial examination of other pathways (e.g., Dual Credit and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)).

f) Led by ACAT's Learner Pathways and Articulation Sub-committees and Council, and in collaboration with post-secondary stakeholders, complete a review of a sample of existing by-program agreements and their use of learning outcomes.

g) Led by ACAT's Learner Pathways and Articulation Sub-committees and Council, in collaboration with post-secondary stakeholders, develop a model for an outcomes-based block transfer agreement that is grounded in learning outcomes and informed by best practices and lessons learned from the sample review of program agreements.

h) Led by ACAT's Admissions Sub-Committee and Council and in collaboration with Education and Advanced Education, examine the relationship between high school transitions and admission to learner pathways in post-secondary, including dual credit pathways.

RESEARCH

ACAT will build on its 2015 *Research Plan* and *Learner Pathways Modernization Initiative (LPMI) Phase 1 Business Assessment Report* by prioritizing key learner pathways and mobility research, data and information collection, analysis, and sharing.

PRIORITY INITIATIVES:

a) Begin to address provincial research gaps regarding transfer credit (e.g., transfer credit awarded, transfer success, transfer barriers), admissions, Dual Credit, PLAR, and interprovincial mobility.

b) Complete LPMI Phase 2 Transfer System Modernization, Phase 3 Stakeholder Tools, and Phase 4 Learner Pathways Connections projects, including gathering initial feedback, beginning to measure results and planning for maintenance and next steps for the Learner Pathways System.

c) Complete initial research, data collection and analysis on transfer credit student success, transfer credit barriers, and transfer credit awarded. Use the research analysis from ACAT's new Learner Pathways System and Transfer Alberta to inform decision-making, activities, and structures for future data collection.

d) Continue to use Learner and Enrolment Reporting System (LERS) data to identify system-level student mobility and develop *Student Mobility Reports* focused on student enrolment flow and tracking for publicly funded institutions in Alberta.

e) Foster research by Articulation Committees on targeted topics in program areas of learner pathways, mobility and best practices.

f) Conduct an initial survey of transfer system member institutions and consult with institution Contact Persons and Academic Advisors to develop an overview and understanding of current admission practices and system issues and opportunities.

g) As a part of LPMI Phase 3 Stakeholder Tools, further refine and develop mechanisms within the ACAT Learner Pathways Catalog, Transfer Alberta website and Search Tool/Mobile App, ACAT SharePoint, and ACAT website for sharing admissions, transfer, and related learner pathways information and data with students, student advisors, and other K-12 and post-secondary stakeholders.

h) Collaborate with Education and Advanced Education to support their initial collection and evaluation of dual credit and other potential high school transitions-related data.

i) Led by ACAT's Research Sub-committee and Council and in collaboration with the Articulation and Admissions Sub-committees, engage stakeholders on key ACAT research questions and initiatives.

j) Led by ACAT Council, continue to facilitate provincial secondary and post-secondary dialogue about key research topics with ACAT, Campus Alberta Quality Council, the Ministry, and other stakeholders.

COMMUNICATION

ACAT will increase engagement and communication with Alberta's and Canada's post-secondary system stakeholders by enhancing current communications, implementing LPMI projects, and developing new communication mechanisms to address communication gaps and support student success.

PRIORITY INITIATIVES:

a) Led by ACAT Council in collaboration with the Ministry and stakeholders, ensure ongoing, regular dialogue between ACAT Chair/Council, Advanced Education Senior Ministry officials, and key Alberta stakeholders, such as student groups and leaders, Senior Academic Officers, Senior Student Services Officers and Registrars.

b) Contribute to key government initiatives, such as the Ministry's ABC ACAT Review, APAGA Review, and adult learning system-related reviews, and align ACAT initiatives and communication to goals and findings where appropriate.

c) Identify and implement ways to enhance communication with and between system stakeholders, including identifying and addressing communication gaps. Engagement with stakeholders through ACAT's *Spotlight* communication, SharePoint site, Site Visits, and new communication mechanisms.

d) Provide students, academic advisors and other key stakeholders with enhanced technology tools, information, guides, communication, and training materials, and opportunities to support implementation and use of the new Learner Pathways System and Transfer Alberta.

e) Develop a communication toolkit for stakeholders and implement new mechanisms of communication for the roll out of LPMI Phases 2-4.

NATIONAL AND INTERPROVINCIAL COLLABORATION

ACAT will build on its role in the founding and facilitation of the Western Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (WestCAT) and the Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT) by continuing to engage in key provincial and national collaboration and activities that support access to learner pathways and mobility in Alberta and Canada.

PRIORITY INITIATIVES:

a) Continue to work with the Canadian consortium of partners to complete key activities that support more seamless transfer and mobility, including a core data standard and learner pathways information and tools across jurisdictions.

b) Develop clear ACAT goals for interprovincial student mobility and transfer, including defining this work, identifying issues and benefits, and developing a plan and targeted activities for working with Alberta Transfer System institutions and Canadian partners.

c) Maintain a strong ACAT presence, contributions, learning, and collaboration at national learner pathways and mobility-related meetings, conferences, and initiatives, including PCCAT, WestCAT, Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA), and other provincial partners.

D) Implement the new 2016 Alberta Learner Pathways System and System Principles in conversation and collaboration with other provinces in the interprovincial consortium.

GOVERNANCE

ACAT Council will evaluate ACAT's current governance to further strengthen Council's effectiveness and update its governance documents and processes to align with ACAT's governance review, ACAT's directional statement, the Government of Alberta's ABC ACAT Review and Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act review.

PRIORITY INITIATIVES:

a) Upon completion of an Advanced Education's ABC ACAT and APAGA Reviews of ACAT, collaborate with the Ministry and Council to address the findings as appropriate in ACAT's governance.

b) Led by ACAT Council, complete an ACAT governance review to evaluate, discuss, and identify changes as needed to the current governance processes, documents, membership, and roles and responsibilities of ACAT.

c) Revise ACAT's Ministerial Order, Mandate and Roles, Code of Conduct, Principles, Policies and Procedures, Governance Recruitment and Structure documents, and Position Profiles as appropriate in alignment with ACAT's governance review and the Ministry's ABC ACAT and APAGA Reviews.

d) Revise the Alberta Transfer System Membership application and process and the Council and Chair evaluation and process, including key documents and related criteria and policy.

e) Update all ACAT governance-related processes and documents, such as Council Orientation, Articulation Committee Orientation, and Contact Persons training materials in alignment with ACAT governance revisions.

CONTACT INFORMATION
Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer
8th Floor, Commerce Place
10155–102 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L5
telephone: 780.422.9021
fax: 780.422.3688
e-mail: acat@gov.ab.ca
website: www.acat.gov.ab.ca

ACAT ACTION PLAN 2017-2019

Copyright ©2017, the Crown in Right of the Province of Alberta, as represented by the Minister of Advanced Education. Permission is hereby given by the copyright owner for any person to reproduce this document for educational purposes, and on a non-profit basis.